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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [KTER](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SALAH AD DIN: TIKRIT UNIVERSITY CONTINUES TO
WELCOME AMERICANS DESPITE INSURGENT THREATS

REF: BAGHDAD 3156

Classified By: PRT Acting Team Leader Barbara Yoder for reasons: 1.4 (b)
) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Salah Ad Din Provincial Reconstruction Team
(PRT) message.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: Tikrit University's president Ali Salah Al
Jebouri continues to defy insurgents by leading staff and
students to forge even closer ties with Salah Ad Din PRT
members and U.S. soldiers, despite Al Qaida's recent
assassination of his cousin and multiple security incidents
on campus late last month. In December, President Ali
attended a Harlem Globetrotter's basketball game at a nearby
U.S. military base and requested a basketball game between
American soldiers and university students. He presided over
robust student attendance at a PRT-sponsored Study Abroad
Center, TOEFL classes, and informal "chats" between students
and American soldiers. Al-Qaida appears to be failing in its
bid to slow the momentum of increasing openness towards
America at this institution, once a bastion of support for
anti-American activity. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) December 3 saw the assassination of Lt. Col. Ahmed
Fahel, formerly Salah Ad Din's top counterterrorism official
and a cousin of Tikrit University President Ali Saleh Al
Jebouri. The assassination came soon after multiple security
incidents on campus: an IED attack, the distribution of
flyers warning readers to "stay away from the occupier," and
the discovery of a cache of explosives. In the recent past,
Tikrit University was a bastion of support for anti-American
insurgents. Yet under President Ali's leadership, the school
has increasingly welcomed American influence and has sought
closer relations with PRT Salah AdDin and U.S. military
members (see REFTEL).

[1](#)4. (C) President Ali told PRTOffs that he believed
perpetrators of the latest security incidents on campus came
from outside the university, and evidence seemed to support
that claim. School officials gave PRTOff and Brigade liaison
a tour of an unguarded perimeter wall. It was immediately
clear that the wall could be easily scaled, and in some
places there were tunnels and rocks piled on top of one
another to assist getting past the barrier. In addition,
Iraqi military sources told PRTOffs that an Al Qaeda-linked
agent was recently arrested by Iraqi Security Forces on
campus. He does not appear to be related to the university,
another indication that the security threats are coming from
outside the institution. (Note: To help keep insurgents off
campus, Brigade is considering the university's request for
assistance in fortifying its perimeter. End Note)

[1](#)5. (U) President Ali has continued to seek closer U.S. ties
despite insurgent threats. This month he attended a Harlem
Globetrotters basketball game at a nearby American base and
asked for a basketball game between American soldiers and
students in the near future. He also expressed eagerness to

press ahead with partnership projects with American universities.

¶6. (C) Students and staff have followed their president's lead in welcoming Americans. The dean of Institutional Relations, who is the PRT's main interlocutor at the University, has reaffirmed all of the university's commitments to PRT-led programs. A group of sixty students has continued to attend weekly "chats" with American soldiers and attendance at TOEFL sessions has remained robust. The monthly education class taught by the PRT Team Leader was postponed as a precautionary measure, but university officials stressed their interest in restarting it at the earliest date possible. Although the Iraqi military has increased its security presence on campus, this has not dampened students' enthusiasm for American events. Students welcomed additional security measures as being for their own protection, an indication that Iraqi authorities are responding to their security needs.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: It is encouraging that extremist elements seem to have lost much of the influence they once wielded at Tikrit University.. Only a few months ago a letter purported to be from Al Qaeda was enough to cause the temporary closure of the PRT-supported Study Abroad Center. Yet the Director of the Center told PRToff that it reopened shortly after and has been filled with students daily. END COMMENT
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